

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 GUATEM 03279 01 OF 02 092047Z

72

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 EB-11 COA-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-07 H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01

PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12 RSR-01 /124 W

----- 034714

R 091950Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 245

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL BELIZE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 GUATEMALA 3279

E.O.11652: XGDS (1)

TAGS: PBOR GT BH UK

SUBJECT: THE BELIZE PROBLEM

REF: GUATEMALA 2885

1. BRITISH CONSUL JOHN WEYMES HAS INFORMED US THAT HE RECEIVED AND COMPLIED WITH INSTRUCTIONS TO MAKE "FIRM PROTEST" TO GOG OVER PRESENCE GUATEMALAN PATROL BOATS AND ARMED GUARDS IN BELIZEAN TERRITORY. WEYMES NOTED THAT HE HAD STRETCHED HIS INSTRUCTIONS "TO THEIR LOWEST LIMIT", MAKING AN ORAL PROTEST (WHICH DID NOT DWELL ON PRESENCE PRESIDENT ARANA IN BELIZEAN KEYS), ACCOMPANIED BY AN INFORMAL AIDE MOEMOIRE TO FONMINISTRY'S DIRECTOR OF BELIZEAN AFFAIRS, FERNANDO SANCHEZ. WEYMES SAID HE POINTED OUT TO SANCHEZ THAT HE WAS MAKING THIS PROTEST RATHER INFORMALLY AS FORMAL ROUTE WOULD HAVE BEEN THROUGH SWISS OR AT LEAST THROUGH DIRECTOR OF CONSULAR AFFAIRS, WHICH IS HIS FORMAL CONTACT WITH GOG. DESPITE LOW KEY AND INFORMAL APPROACH, SANCHEZ FLATLY REJECTED HIS ORAL PROTEST, ALTHOUGH HE KEPT THE AIDE MEMOIRE AS AN "UNOFFICIAL PAPER".

2. WEYMES SAID HE HAD SELECTED THIS INFORMAL MANNER TO  
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 GUATEM 03279 01 OF 02 092047Z

MAKE THE PROTEST AS HE BELIEVED THAT ANYTHING MORE

FORMAL WOULD JEOPARDIZE PROPOSED MEETING BETWEEN FONMIN ARENALES AND A BRITISH REPRESENTATIVE, WHICH BRITISH STILL BELIEVE TO BE HIGHLY IMPORTANT TO HELP PACIFY PREMIER PRICE.

3. AT FOURTH OF JULY RECEPTION FONMIN ARENALES INFORMED US THAT HE HAD TENTATIVELY AGREED TO HAVE "ABSOLUTELY SECRET" MEETING WITH BRITISH REPRESENTATIVE IN NEW YORK IN LATTER PART OF JULY. AT THIS MEETING, HE SAID, HE INTENDED TO TELL BRITISH THAT HE HAD SOME IDEAS (WHICH HE DID NOT ELABORATE) ON HOW PROGRESS IN SOLVING PROBLEM MIGHT BE ACHIEVED BUT THAT NO ACTION COULD BE TAKEN TOWARDS SOLUTION BEFORE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS NEXT MARCH SINCE IN THIS ELECTORAL YEAR GOG DID NOT WANT TO GIVE OPPOSITION ANY PRETEXT WHATSOEVER TO SEIZE UPON BELIZE PROBLEM AS ELECTION ISSUE. ARENALES SAID HE ALSO INTENDED TO TELL BRITISH THAT ANY MOVE TOWARDS BELIZEAN INDEPENDENCE DURING PRE-ELECTORAL PERIOD WOULD, FOR DOMESTIC POLITICAL REASONS, FORCE GUATEMALA TO REACT MILITARILY.

4. ARENALES WENT ON TO EXPRESS CONCERN THAT ANY INCIDENT IN BELIZEAN WATERS COULD BE SPARK THAT SETS OFF OPPOSITION EXPLOITATION BELIZE ISSUE. HE NOTED THAT SEVERAL SMALL GUATEMALAN FISHING VESSELS HAD "STRAYED" INTO BELIZEAN TERRITORY, HAD BEEN CAPTURED AND THE "HUMBLE FISHERMEN" FINED. HE SAID HE HAD HAD DIFFICULTY KEEPING HIGH LEVEL MILITARY OFFICERS FROM REACTING STRONGLY (APPARENTLY SOME OF THEM ARE FINANCIALLY INVOLVED IN FISHING COOPERATIVES AND THUS HAD A PERSONAL INTEREST IN THE INCIDENT). ARENALES ALSO NOTED THAT HE HAD BEEN ABLE TO KEEP THE INCIDENT OUT OF THE GUATEMALAN NEWSPAPERS. HE REITERATED THAT PUBLICATION OF ANY INCIDENT OF THIS NATURE COULD PUT THE GOVERNMENT IN A DIFFICULT POSITION, AS THEY WANTED TO KEEP THE BELIZE ISSUE ABSOLUTELY QUIET UNTIL AFTER THE ELECTIONS. WE TOOK OPPORTUNITY TO NOTE THAT INCIDENTS SUCH AS RECENT VISIT OF PRESIDENT ARANA, ESCORTED BY NAVAL PATROL BOATS, COULD BE THE SPARK THAT WOULD CAUSE THE VERY SITUATION THE GOVERNMENT FEARED. ARENALES REPLIED THAT CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 GUATEM 03279 01 OF 02 092047Z

HE RECOGNIZED THIS, BUT THEN SOMEWHAT ILLOGICALLY WENT ON TO SAY THAT IN THE INTEREST OF KEEPING THINGS QUIET THE BELIZEANS SHOULD "LOOK THE OTHER WAY" IN CASES SUCH AS THIS.

5. THE FOLLOWING DAY AT VENEZUELAN NATIONAL DAY RECEPTION, WEYMES SOUGHT OUT DCM TO SAY HE BECOMING INCREASINGLY CONCERNED OVER MOUNTING NUMBER OF INCIDENTS INVOLVING

GUATEMALANS IN BELIZEAN WATERS. HE SAID THAT JUST A FEW DAYS AGO GUATEMALAN VICE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE HAD BEEN FOUND IN KEYS AND THAT VERY TENSE SITUATION DEVELOPED IN WHICH BELIZEAN AUTHORITIES AND GUATEMALAN ARMED GUARDS WERE LEVELING WEAPONS AT EACH OTHER, ALTHOUGH NO SHOTS WERE EXCHANGED. WEYMES SAID BELIZEANS ARE BECOMING CONVINCED THAT GOG IS PURPOSELY PROVOKING THEM, AND THEY ARE INCREASING PATROLS IN KEYS AND SOUTHERN PORTION OF COAST. WEYMES IS MOST CONCERNED THAT ANOTHER BELIZE CRISIS WILL DEVELOP IF INCIDENTS CONTINUE.

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PAGE 01 GUATEM 03279 02 OF 02 092051Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 GUATEMALA 3279

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6. COMMENT: (A) THERE IS A SERIOUS INCONSISTENCY-- NOT TO SAY LACK OF RESPONSIBILITY--BETWEEN THE GOG'S PROFESSED DESIRE TO KEEP THE BELIZE ISSUE QUIET UNTIL AFTER ELECTIONS AND HIGH LEVEL GOG OFFICIALS PURSUING THEIR SPORT FISHING INTERESTS IN BELIZEAN WATERS UNDER ARMED ESCORT. ARENALES IS NOT BEING REASONABLE IN EXPECTING BELIZEANS TO LOOK THE OTHER WAY.  
(B) FROM EVERYTHING WE SEE, THE GUATEMALANS ARE NOT

SEEKING DELIBERATELY TO PROVOKE THE BELIZEANS AND DO WANT TO KEEP THE BELIZE ISSUE OUT OF THE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN. THE PROBLEM STEMS FROM THE FACT THAT THE PRESIDENT AND SOME CABINET LEVEL OFFICERS ARE ARDENT FISHERMEN WITH SUITABLE CRAFT AT THEIR DISPOSAL TO MAKE IT TO THE KEYS, WHO FIND IT HARD TO STAY AWAY FROM SUPERB FISHING GROUNDS WHICH HAVE BEEN USED BY GOG OFFICIALS FOR YEARS--USUALLY WITHOUT BEING INTERCEPTED. FURTHERMORE, IT IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT ANYONE IN THE GOG WOULD DARE TELL THE PRESIDENT HE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 GUATEM 03279 02 OF 02 092051Z

SHOULD NOT GO FISHING IN WATERS THAT GUATEMALA PUBLICLY MAINTAINS IS PART OF ITS TERRITORY.  
(C) SITUATION IS POTENTIALLY SUFFICIENTLY SERIOUS TO WARRANT SOME DISCREET ACTION ON OUR PART. I SUGGEST DEPARTMENT CONSIDER ADVISIBILITY OF MENTIONING TO BRITISH OUR ASSESSMENT AS DESCRIBED ABOVE AND ADVISE THAT IN PROJECTED TALKS WITH ARENALES AT END OF THIS MONTH THEY POINT OUT TO HIM MUTUAL INTEREST IN AVOIDING A NEW CRISIS WHICH ON GUATEMALAN SIDE INVOLVES REFRAINING FROM FISHING EXPEDITIONS SUCH AS TWO WHICH HAVE PROVOKED CURRENT CONCERN. WE HERE WOULD USE APPROPRIATE OPPORTUNITIES, AS WE HAVE ALREADY DONE, DISCRETELY TO POINT OUT WISDOM AND SELF-INTEREST OF GUATEMALANS IN AVOIDING SITUATIONS WHICH WOULD PROVOKE WHAT THEY SEEK TO AVOID.  
BOWDLER

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## Message Attributes

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**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Review Authority:** garlanwa  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:** ANOMALY  
**Review Date:** 31 JAN 2002  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <31-Jan-2002 by martinjw>; APPROVED <15 FEB 2002 by garlanwa>  
**Review Markings:**

Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
30 JUN 2005

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** THE BELIZE PROBLEM  
**TAGS:** PBOR, GT, BH, UK  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005